

"Yes."

"Do you believe that the front troops are tired, deserve a rest, and should be rotated with units at the rear?"

The general's answer was evasive. "Yes, of course . . . but on the other hand . . . you cannot satisfy everybody. . . ."

Then I fired my last question. "Do you think that the Petrograd soldiers are such a gang of cowards, such 'revolutionary trash'—to use your words—that you do not want to have them under your command? Please answer directly, yes or no."

The conference was spellbound. The general, red in the face, turned to me to reply with his usual arrogance, but changed his mind and said casually, "I really do not know what you mean, Mr. Commissar. I would be happy to have the gallant Petrograd regiments here."

Then the Petrograd delegates were on their feet, yelling that "rotation" was nothing but a pretext for disarming the Petrograd garrison on the eve of its final victory over the people's enemies. "Rotation will not help the soldiers at the front," they shouted. "Peace is our common aim. Go home, join forces with the workers and soldiers fighting for peace!" The front soldiers were used to such speeches, but when they heard men from a rear garrison use these phrases as excuses for refusing to replace them in the trenches, they saw red and replied with vehement accusations and threats against the loafers in Petrograd.

In closing the conference, I invited the Petrograd delegation to appoint a committee of ten or twelve men to tour the front and talk with the men in the trenches. The committee was appointed and reported to the Petrograd Soviet a week later that the soldiers of the Northern Front supported the demand for troop rotation. We were close to winning the campaign, but our time was running short. The Communists, who had made good use of the postponement of the Constituent Assembly, were ready for the decisive attack.

THE BOLSHEVIKS STRIKE

The Council of the Republic was debating the problem of war and peace. Opinions ranged from those of the right-wing Cadets to the left-wing Socialists. The debate ended on October 31. A dozen resolutions had been put to a vote but none got a majority. The Council turned to foreign policy. Three lines of action were advocated: Miliukov's policy, confirming the war objectives of Tsarist diplomacy; the policy of the majority of the All-Russian Executive Committee, demanding a revision of war aims and seeking a negotiated democratic peace; and the policy of the left-wing Socialists, demanding a